

Down East Guide Service



May/June 2010

BT-11: Did You Know?

- ◆ Did you know that it has been over 10 years since the military has surveyed the expanding bird nesting colonies that are now occupying BT-11 bombing range?*
- ◆ Did you know that in 2009 over 156,000 rounds of 50 cal ammunition and over 570,000 rounds of 7.62 caliber munitions were fired into the water and wetlands of BT-11? Assuming each 50 cal projectile (usually lead) weighs 40 grams and each 7.62 cal projectiles weigh 4 grams, this totals over 18,000 pounds of lead fired into BT-11 in one year!!!!
- ◆ Did you know that the NCWRC Goose Creek Game Land (Pamlico Point Public Waterfowl Impoundments) and Maw Point (NeuPamBay Waterfowl Impoundments) were once used as bombing targets and may have received live ordnance*, yet no military restrictions exist on the use of these areas?

* Source: Navy responses to questions asked by Rep. Alice Underhill on behalf of Home on the Range/Cease Fire.

Captain George H. Beckwith Jr.
B.S. Marine Biology

Captain's Message: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

The good news is that fishing is great and getting better. The cobia fishing has been nothing less than "epic" and may tie into a spectacular year for tarpon. Read about the Roanoke Recap, also how new regulations may have positive impacts on speckled trout and red drum.

The bad news is that the Navy has been totally unwilling to compromise on access to the Traditional Use Areas of BT-11 and that they are moving forward with plans to expand this range. It is unfortunate that the Navy is not, as required by law, allowing as much access as practicable, especially when the range is not in use.

Finally, the ugly. Capt. Ray's Louisiana trip has been cancelled due to the oil spill that is devastating the Gulf Coast. Closer to home are some disturbing facts in the BT-11 side bar. As you can see, I am not too happy with some of the decisions that our military is making. But let us not forget this Memorial Day that it is the men and women of our armed forces that have sacrificed to give us the FREEDOM to question the decisions that our government makes. I personally thank all of you. Tight lines, calm seas and God Bless, Capt. George H. Beckwith Jr.

Epic Cobia Fishing Continues

No one can doubt that this has been and continues to be the best cobia season anyone has seen. While we were still fishing on the Roanoke, the cobia appeared on the coast, about two weeks earlier than normal. Capt. Greg Voliva reported schools of 20+ fish on the surface, feeding on the numerous "bait balls" of menhaden up and down the Crystal Coast. We quickly shifted gears to take advantage of this truly "epic" cobia fishing.

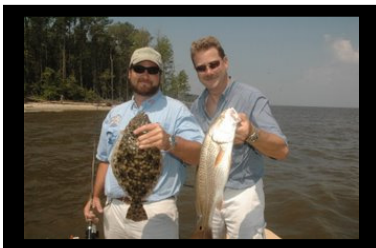
On May 16, Wayne Register and Pat Renfro shattered the Down East boat record by landing 34 cobia in one day. We have had many, many double digit days with the highest success rates of any previous year.

Large schools of cobia should remain on the coast through June and into July. Their northerly migration seems to have been interrupted by cold water temps in the Chesapeake Bay and north of Hatteras.



Jay Gregg (Carolina Outdoors Television Show), Capt. George and Jeff Boyer with Buck Baker Racing"

The Gallery:



Tarpon: Will they make a hard left turn?

Capt. Rick Caton, Owen Lupton and other Pamlico County natives, the original tarpon anglers of North Carolina, describe schools of thousands of tarpon rolling throughout the Pamlico Sound. Although the last couple of years have brought us good tarpon fishing, what happened to those large schools? Some claim that they have been bypassing North Carolina and moving north to the Chesapeake Bay. More and more tarpon reports from the Chesapeake may confirm this theory. Local tarpon anglers are hoping that the cold water that

has delayed the cobia's northern migration may indeed stop the tarpon as well, resulting in the best tarpon fishing in over 20 years. Could this be the year that they make a hard left turn and flood into the Pamlico like the good ol' days? July and August are the best months for NC tarpon.

Argentina: Last Minute Openings

Down East Guide Service has a great team in Argentina and we can arrange a duck/dove hunting trip almost any time of year. Come join Capt. George Beckwith July 14-21 on a trip that he will personally be hosting. Four full days of duck hunting and 2 days of dove hunting. Some last minute cancellations have resulted in available discounts for this trip. Drop him a line at 252-671-3474 or info@pamlicoguide.com to discuss these last minute opportunities.

Also:

Kids Hunt Doves Free

Advance booking discounts for 2011

Mix Bag and Giant Red Drum

From now through October mixed bag fishing for specks, puppy drum (redfish), flounder and striped bass is excellent. The peak of the giant red drum fishing is in August and September with incredibly consistent catches of red drum in excess of 40 pounds. Call us anytime to line up a day on the water with one of the Down East Guides, but I cannot stress enough the importance of booking your Giant Red Drum trip as early as possible. The guides who specialize in this fishery are booking up very fast with limited dates available. If you have a large group of 4-6 people and would like the comfort of fishing in a much larger boat, we are taking reservations for Capt. Rick Caton on the Free Agent.



Louisiana Trip Cancelled Due to Oil Spill

Louisiana's coastal ecosystem and tourism/fishing economy has been destroyed by the ongoing oil spill that has dwarfed the Exxon Valdez. Our prayers go out to the fishing families affected. Hopefully, this disaster will not make it onto the shores of North Carolina as the oil reaches the Loop Current and the Gulf Stream which could carry it off of our coast.

It is unimaginable that offshore drilling would be allowed without any realistic plan for immediately stopping such a leak. Hopefully this is a wakeup call for those who would consider jeopardizing North Carolina's Crystal Coast with an industry that is incapable of averting such a disaster, nor stopping the ongoing damage more than 30 days after the event.

Costa Rica: 2500 Billfish and Counting!

Although February and March were slower than normal due to a strong El Nino, the waters of the Pacific cooled and fishing improved in April with an average daily catch of 7 sails/day. May yielded daily marlin bites and big schools of tuna. The good fishing should continue throughout the summer which is a great time to be in Costa Rica and take advantage of Green Season Discounts.

On May 9 the Dragin Fly landed billfish number 2500, a nice blue marlin.

Advance reservations are highly recommended for high season dates, December 2010 through April 2011. Capt. George Beckwith will be hosting a trip to Costa Rica in early October, targeting **huge tarpon** on the Atlantic side and **billfish** on the Pacific. Inquire at info@pamlicoguide.com for dates and details of this "both coasts" trip.



Red Drum May Benefit From Net Regulations.

Any of you who have fished with me know that I am a "commercial friendly" fishing guide. I believe that nets, in the right hands, are effective at harvesting a renewable resource with very limited unwanted bycatch. Unfortunately some commercial fishing practices are not as "clean" and have recently resulted in new regulations. To protect sub-legal red drum in the creeks, small mesh gill nets now have to be attended. This is resulting in many, many 12-16 inch red drum growing to larger sizes. New regulations on the flounder gill net fishery as a result of sea turtle interactions have resulted in stricter large mesh gill net regulations which will inevitably be beneficial to slot sized red drum from 18-27 inches. The ban of commercial sale of red drum over 27 inches, which has been in place for 20 years and the ban of recreational harvest of these breeding adults since 1998 has protected the adult spawning stock which continues to grow and produce record numbers of puppy drum. The future is bright for North Carolina red drum and other fisheries and it's getting brighter.

Roanoke Rapids Recap:

A cold and wet winter resulted in full lakes upstream of the Roanoke River. In anticipation of a wet spring and possible downstream flooding, dam operators discharged large amounts of water through early April. The cold, high water narrowed the window of successful shad fishing to just a few weeks. Then the skies cleared and a very dry spring resulted in water levels in the lakes rapidly dropping. Dam operators began to hold water back to allow enough water for successful striped bass spawning in the river. Striped bass eggs must drift in the current for 72 hours before hatching and there must be enough water flow to carry them down to the estuary. Fortunately for the stripers, it looks like there was enough water for a successful spawn, but starting in mid-April, every few days water levels in the river dropped. As Capt. Ray describes, "Dropping water levels 'freak them out' and make for tough fishing." We would have a couple of fantastic days of striper fishing, then the water would drop and it would take a few days for the fishing to improve to 100 fish outings. Nonetheless, it was a successful season with catches of several fish in the high 20-30 pound range and we had no problem filling our limit during the April keeper season.

Speks: Not All Gone! New Limits in Place.

Fears of cold stun events that can wipe out the speckled trout were alleviated in May when the water warmed. Capt. Joe Ward and Capt. Gary Dubiel started to report good catches of specks, puppy drum and flounder. Some areas, such as the North River and Cambell Creek, were hit very hard by cold temps and lost a lot of trout this winter. It was feared that the several inches of snow received on the creeks of the Neuse were devastating on specks. Fortunately, the rains and snow melt lowered salinity in most creeks and flushed trout into the main Neuse River, where the water is deeper and the fish escaped the coldest temperatures. As the waters of the Neuse warmed in May, good reports started to come in, including consistent catches of remarkable fish in the 5-7 pound range. New rules will help protect these larger fish, the most productive spawners. The new limit for specks is 6 fish/angler, of which only 3 may be over 24 inches, about a 4 pound fish.





BT-11 Bombing Range Expansion: Navy is unwilling to compromise.

After several meetings with Navy officials and a tour of the area, no compromises have been offered which would allow even limited use of Traditional Use Areas which have been utilized by boaters and fishermen for over 50 years without interference with military operations or injuries to the public. No one is currently asking for the closure of this range, which is an important training area for our military, but there is no reason that public access cannot continue. The Navy has moved forward with the installation of 10 pilings, unlighted navigation hazards, intended to close many miles of shoreline and waters of the Neuse. Plans are moving forward with an expansion of BT-11 which will further restrict public access. I encourage you to write any political friends that may be helpful in persuading the Navy to allow as much access to Traditional Use Areas as possible, especially at times that the range is not in use. You can also request that the Army Corps of Engineers denies the Navy's request for an intermittent expansion of BT-11:

Richard Spencer, Project Manager for Military Bases
 69 Darlington Ave.
 Wilmington, NC 28403 or richard.k.spencer@usace.army.mil

The “Down East” Guides:

Capt. George Beckwith
(Down East)

Capt. Ray Massengill
(No Doubt)

Capt. Gary Dubiel
(Spec Fever)

Capt. Lee Parsons
(Gotta fly)

Capt. Travis Hardison
(Scalawag)

Capt. Joe Shute
(Fish Finder)

Capt. Brian Harrington
(Extreme Measures)

Capt. James Smith
(Dragin Fly)

Capt. Mark Hoff
(Sweetwater)

Capt. Joe Ward
(Fly Daddy)

Capt. Greg Voliva

Capt. Rick Caton



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